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ABSTRACT

The failure of the Rochester School Board in March 1967 to adopt a comprehensive program of school desegregation surprised many observers. On February 1, 1967, Superintendent Goldberg broadcast four desegregation plans to the public, and on March 16, 1967 the school board voted three to two against all four desegregation plans and adopted instead a plan of increased open enrollment coupled with compensatory education in the inner-city schools. A few weeks after the plans had been made public, the center research team sent a mail questionnaire to all parents previously interviewed. Of 421 parents, 106 answered the mail questionnaire. Parents were asked about (1) their exposure to the public presentations of the four plans; (2) the degree of their participation in the discussion that followed; (3) how informed they were about the plans; and (4) their attitudes toward school desegregation per se and toward the four plans. In what follows, we first include summaries of four plans presented to the school board, then present the relevant findings from an intensive interview study of 421 Rochester parents undertaken in the fall of 1966 and a followup mail questionnaire meant to tap responses of these parents to the plans presented to the board at the beginning of that month, pointing out, wherever possible, the implications of what we have found. (Author/JM)

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Resistance and Support for School Desegregation Proposals: A Study of Parental Reactions in Rochester

by

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Report II: (Rochester Project)

Summary of Chapters IV-VII
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Committee on Mass Media
Gladys Engel Lang, Assistant Director

October 13, 1967

WORKING OUTLINE FOR PREPARATION OF REPORT ON ROCHESTER PROJECT

Resistance and Support for School Desegregation Proposals: A Study of Parental Reactions

(tentative title)

PREFACE. Initiation of study under contract; responsibility for planning, field work, analysis, preparation of report; acknowledgments.

I. Goal of Report. The basic problem: what have we learned from the Rochester study about potential sources of resistance and support for various kinds of efforts towards quality integration in large urban centers? How typical is Rochester? Specific questions posed and discussed in the report. Order of presentation.

II. The Center Project in Rochester. General outline of research design and methodology, sample selection, school selection, preparation of plan for elementary school desegregation, design of follow-up mail questionnaire, etc. [Technical details to be included in Appendix.]

III.* The City of Rochester and Its Schools. Relevant demographic background information on Rochester, Monroe County and school population.

Summarized in this Report

IV. Efforts Towards School Desegregation in Rochester. A history of recent events; what was expected to happen and what happened. Section will include synopses of plans submitted to Board of Education.

V. A Profile of the Public School Parent. Analysis of some relevant parental interview data.

VI. Parental Reactions to Desegregation Proposals. General analysis of types of responses to follow-up mail questionnaire and factors associated with these.

VII. Types of Responses to Desegregation Proposals (qualitative analysis).

A. The PRO group (white).
B. The PRO group (Negro).
C. The PRO-MINUS group.
D. The CON-PLUS group.
E. The CON and CON-MINUS group.

*II and III may be reversed in final presentation.

VIII. Summary of Findings. Implications for action.

APPENDICES

A. Maps.
B. Tables.
C. Interview Schedules.
D. Methological Explication.
E. Indexes (participation, exposure, etc.).
F. Background for Inner-City Action (paper prepared by Dr. McKelvey).

CHAPTER IV

EFFORTS TOWARDS SCHOOL DESEGREGATION IN ROCHESTER (Summary)

The failure of the Rochester School Board in March 1967 to adopt a comprehensive program of school desegregation surprised many observers. The school system's advanced position, evidenced by past efforts to improve racial balance, and the relatively small amount of open opposition in the community led to the impression that some far-reaching plan would be accepted by the Board.

1. When Commissioner Allen issued his June 1963 directive to all New York school boards, the Rochester school staff responded quickly and with candor to discuss the state of racial imbalance in the Rochester schools.

2. In its September 1963 report to Commissioner Allen, the Rochester School Board stated unanimously that "improved racial balance in the schools would contribute to a more favorable climate for increasing pupil motivation and achievement . . ."

3. Having issued its policy statement, the Rochester school system acted quickly to put its policy into effect. In November 1963, the school board directed the administration to implement at the earliest possible date -- the beginning of the next semester (February 1964) -- an open enrollment plan. The administration designated as sending schools the six elementary schools with the greatest percentage of nonwhite students. Eighteen predominantly white schools were designated as receiving schools.

4. Though some parents filed law suits to the program, there was, compared to other cities, very little organized community or parental

opposition. Even more significant, when the court suits were decided in favor of the school system, the defeated plaintiffs ceased active opposition.

5. On the other hand, the initiative for expanded efforts towards reducing racial imbalance in the fall of 1964 came solely from within the school system: There was little, if any, external pressure from civil rights groups. Again, in January 1966, on its own initiative, the school board published a racial census indicating that despite these desegregation efforts, racial imbalance had actually increased in the inner-city schools.

6. Since steps already taken had not reduced racial imbalance, the Rochester School Board in May 1966 unanimously directed the Superintendent to have ready by February 1967 a plan for the desegregation of the elementary schools.

7. In the Fall of 1966 while desegregation plans were being developed, and again without pressure from civil rights groups, school feeder patterns were changed permitting Negroes from the inner-city to go to two predominantly white high schools. Also, Superintendent Goldberg embarked on an extensive, widely publicized effort to persuade suburban school districts to accept Negro pupils from Rochester's schools. (The suburb of West Irondequoit had begun doing so in 1965.) Though only one suburb -- well-to-do Brighton -- agreed to take Negro pupils on a full-time basis during the current school year (February 1967), only one suburb -- Rush-Henrietta -- outrightly rejected the idea behind Goldberg's proposal. The others accepted the principle but said they could not start as yet. Three agreed to take in Negro pupils during the summer sessions. In view of the

pioneering nature of the effort, the results gave reason for optimism.

8. Despite the accelerated efforts towards school desegregation, there continued to be little evidence of polarized controversy over school desegregation in the fall of 1966. No strong vocal opposition formed. Dr. William Rock, who had been given virtually sole responsibility for developing the system's desegregation plan, told members of the Center that during the entire time he was at work on a plan, he had received not one single threatening call or letter.

9. However, the Superintendent's efforts to involve the suburbs, coming as they did in the midst of the development of Rochester's desegregation plan, may have had the unintended effect of identifying Goldberg as an advocate of busing to reduce racial imbalance. In addition, Elliott Shapiro, on special leave from New York City to Rochester during the school year 1966-67, was quoted several times by the newspapers as indicating that the city's desegregation plan was going to include the suburbs.

To sum up the developments as of January 1967, it could fairly be said that in terms of speed, willingness to act, readiness to acknowledge integration as a legitimate school goal, and candor in admitting the limitations of its own programs, the Rochester school system was one of the most advanced in the nation, and seemed to enjoy the trust of the citizenry.

The Plans and What Followed

On February 1, 1967 Superintendent Goldberg broadcast four desegregation plans to the public, and on March 16, 1967 -- only six weeks after the presentation of the plans to the public -- the school board, (the same one

which less than a year before had unanimously directed the superintendent to develop a desegregation plan) voted three to two against all four desegregation plans and adopted instead a plan of increased open enrollment coupled with compensatory education in the inner-city schools. The board thus adopted a course of action which the board and the superintendent had said many times could not solve the problem of racial imbalance.

The Board, along with many other persons in the community, had evidently interpreted organized opposition to the plans presented to be too strong and the show of support for the plans to be too weak to justify controversial innovation at this time. The Center study, the most relevant chapters of which are summarized here, should shed some light on the validity of that interpretation: what were the potential sources of resistance and support for what kinds of plans among Rochester parents? In what follows we first include summaries of four plans presented to the school board -- one, the Home Base Plan developed by our Center -- then present the relevant findings from an intensive interview study of 421 Rochester parents undertaken in the Fall of 1966 and a follow-up mail questionnaire (February 1967) meant to tap responses of these parents to the plans presented to the Board at the beginning of that month, pointing out, wherever possible, the implications of what we have found.

PLANS*

The Rochester Plan.

This divides the elementary schools into ten units consisting of primary (K-3) and intermediate schools (4-6). The primary schools would be

*Educational innovations and further specifics in the Rochester and Natural Educational Park Plans are detailed in the report to the Board of Education publicly presented by Superintendent Goldberg on February 1, 1967.

located near the periphery of the city while the intermediate schools would be located in or near the center of the city. Each unit involves the combination of several schools to obtain a percentage of nonwhites roughly similar to the city wide average. Most of the units are neither contiguous nor geographically compact. For instance, unit one, composed of five schools, includes School 38, which borders on Lake Ontario to the North; School 43 on the far west side; Schools 1 and 46 on the far southeast side; and School 2 in the inner-city, which is really in the southernmost quarter of the city. Under this plan, the pupils from School 2 in grades K-3 would be divided and bused to Schools 38, 43, 1 and 46. The pupils from all five schools in grades 4-6 would attend School 2. The distance from School 2 to School 38 is approximately seven miles. School 2 is 96.8% nonwhite; the other schools are overwhelmingly white. Combined, the five schools should have a population that is 35.4% nonwhite. Though the Plan necessitates some new construction, most of the existing buildings would be used. Thirty-seven percent of the pupils would have to be bused.

The Rochester Natural Educational Park Plan.

This divides the city into seven (relatively) geographically compact areas. For each area, an educational complex would be built in a city park or similar setting. Each complex would have both primary and intermediate grades, and each area would be approximately one-third nonwhite. One of the suggested areas is not compact, extending from Lake Ontario down into the heart of the inner-city. None of the existing facilities could be used. Eighty percent of the pupils would have to be bused.

The Combination Plan.

This is essentially not another plan but a strategy for gradual solution through a modified Rochester Plan evolving into the Natural Educational Park solution. Intermediate schools would be built in park settings. During the construction period, primary grade pupils from the inner-city would be bused to schools on the periphery of the city. The intermediate classes in the inner-city would remain predominantly Negro, but would have class size reduced to 15 pupils.

The Home Base Plan.

Developed by the Center for Urban Education, the Home Base Plan calls for a basic redistricting of the Rochester School System. The present forty-three elementary schools would be divided into seven areas with each area including schools near the periphery of the city as well as schools in the inner-city. The boundaries of each area should be so drawn as to make for the most compact geographical entity. The proposed plan aims at bringing about immediately rather considerable changes in the present levels of racial balance throughout the Rochester School System. At the same time, these first steps are to initiate a gradual movement toward a more long-range program for achieving quality integrated education for all children.

School zones will have to be changed if the best possible districting is to be achieved. The redistricting will have to be based not simply on the racial composition of children currently enrolled in the schools but on the child population in any particular area. Illustrated below is an

example of one such district which would meet the requirements of minimizing busing and stand a good chance of achieving "racial stability" at a reasonable level of nonwhite enrollment. This district would be constituted out of Schools 11, 25, 27, 6, 36, 39, and 22. Student enrollment in this district would be thirty-seven (37) percent nonwhite. Each of the schools, which together make up a district, should have a faculty capable of teaching the entire elementary curricul . It should also develop particular skills and specialties in teaching two of the subjects. Thus, one school would have a faculty particularly skilled in teaching, for example, language arts and arithmetic, while another would specialize in science and social studies. Children with widely different capabilities would have available to them a whole staff of experts who could cater to a variety of individual needs for both remedial and advanced work. To coordinate the activities within each district and to ensure optimum utilization of special skills, an administrative corodinator would be appointed to serve as curriculum director for the group of schools in the district.

Each school will have a double function. It will provide staff and resources to children throughout the district, but each school in a district will also serve as a Home Base School. All children except those in Kindergarten, would attend classes not only in their home school but in other schools of the area as well. The first three age levels beyond kindergarten would be non-graded, children being grouped initially according to the reading and arithmetic levels at which they are comfortable. They will attend specialized classes outside their home school twice a week;

on two other days, their classmates join them for specialized classes. Thus they will be together in an integrated class setting four days a week. Fourth, fifth, and sixth graders would have integrated classes five days a week, with some students going to other schools three days a week and receiving their classmates in their own home school two days a week. Each student would report to his neighborhood Home Base School in the morning and return there at the end of the school day where the home school teacher would tie together the various learning experiences of the pupil into a unifying theme. The transportation to and from the schools would be supervised by the teachers.

Classroom groupings would be based on criteria meant to maximize motivation and raise achievement levels. Using such criteria within suggested districts would result in classes balanced insofar as ratio of Negroes and whites is concerned. The key point is that the disadvantaged child will have an opportunity to attend classes with others who may on the average be more academically advanced, but yet not so advanced as to make the academic gap unbridgeable.

Given the current pattern of residential segregation in Rochester, there is simply no way to eliminate segregation in the inner-city schools without some transportation. The Center for Urban Education has tried to take cognizance of some parental objections to the busing of their children out of their neighborhood schools. The Plan includes provisions specifically meant to strengthen the ties between parents and the schools their children attend.

The Plan is designed for immediate desegregation. On an interim basis, existing schools would be used. Under these conditions attempts have been made to keep transportation at a minimum. However, the long range goal for achieving quality integrated education i' 's :onstruction plans that would eventually establish educational parks in each area. All new buildings and rebuilding should be in a cluster of schools as nearly as possible in the center of each area. It should include a high school and an intermediate school with space prcvided for housing such specialized facilities as a swimming pool, library, laboratories, audiovisua_ equipment and special education functions. In the mea:time, the plan calls for a reorganization of the city's districts that will serve to encourage suburban-urban cooperation. As set up, the plan could, in the future, fit in very well with any efforts at the metropolitanization of school services.

A PROFILE OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENT (Summary)

General Findings.

1. Rochester may be popularly thought of as a city of professionals and white collar workers but the typical parent with children in the public schools is a "blue collar" worker with a large family and limited formal education. Almost 2/3 had at least four children.

2. A sizeable proportion of the 421 parents *interviewed were from less favored groups in the city. Among the whites 50 percent had not finished high school; among the nonwhites the proportion was 63 percent.

3. The level of aspiration for children was found to be relatively low. But, though the nonwhite parents in the sample were less well educated and trained, their expectations and hopes for their children were found to be as high as, if not somewhat higher than, that of the whites.

4. A high proportion (almost 3/4) of the white parents were born in Rochester, compared to almost 1/4 of the nonwhites. Contrary to what is commonly believed, the nonwhite parent population is not just fresh out of the rural South: fifty-one percent have been residents of Rochester for the past 16 years of more.

5. The nonwhite parent was less apt to be satisfied than the white parent in the elementary school but no difference was found at the high school level. White parents of children in the elementary schools were more likely than nonwhite parents to be very satisfied with their schools. Most satisfied were those parents -- both white and nonwhite -- with children in the first grade. In general, both white and nonwhite parents of children in elementary schools were more likely to be very satisfied than

*250 were white and 171 nonwhite.

parents with children in high school. Given the rather good reputation of the schools and the general satisfaction with life in Rochester, the number of parents who were very unsatisfied with the schools was greater than we would have expected.

6. Differences in attitudes among parents had more to do with their experiences with some individual school their children were attending, rather than whether the school attended was racially balanced or imbalanced.

7. While there were some differences in the criteria used by whites and nonwhites for evaluating the school their children attended, more striking was the similarity of their responses to what they liked and disliked about the schools.

Sources of Satisfaction.

1. By far the most important factor in promoting a high level of satisfaction with the school was the parent's contact (direct or through the child) with the teacher. The second item mentioned most often as a source of satisfaction was the principal of the school. Third in importance was the location of the school ("close to home"), with the physical plant (the school building) of importance only in the case of a new school.

2. At the elementary school level the typical public school parent is most concerned about the child's psychological and physical well-being; preoccupation and general concern about subject matter and teaching ability assumes more importance at the high school level. The nonwhite parent was more likely to emphasize the need for challenge both at the elementary and high school level. Most parents -- both white and Negro -- stressed the ability to keep order and discipline in the classroom as the mark of a "good"

teacher. By a ratio of two-to-one, these parents expressed preference for a man teacher. Preference for a male teacher seems to be typically that of the white father of lower middle-class status whose child is not doing well in school; he thinks the answer is discipline rather than academic challenge.

3. What seems pertinent is that the typical Rochester public school parent at the elementary level is more concerned with the psychological and physical well-being of the child than with "what is being taught." The school is seen as a place of "nurture" and the teacher's role is to look out for the child and protect him -- even against other children.

4. While some individual parents sometimes spoke at length about the curriculum, innovations in teaching, etc., there did not appear to be the competitive concern about "getting the child into college" that is typical of the suburban middle-class parent in the East. The more general attitude expressed was "given the proper environment, the child will learn." Judging by the responses to questions about parental participation, the typical Rochester public school parent seemed to be willing to leave educational decisions (i.e., curriculum, choice of teachers, etc.), including school desegregation, in the hands of professional educators.

Sources of Dissatisfaction.

Parents in segregated white schools were somewhat more likely to mention the principal or the lack of specific facilities in the school as primary sources of dissatisfaction; those in segregated Negro schools were more likely to complain about other children at the school and defects in the school plant.

Orientations to School Desegregation.

1. When parents were asked about suggestions made to improve educational opportunities for all, the most favored plan was "improving schools in the inner-city through compensatory services." Whites generally expressed least resistance to and most support for proposals that furthered integration among older children: open enrollment at the junior high and senior high school levels, the creation of middle schools, and cooperation between city and suburban school systems.

2. Open enrollment at the elementary level, which would necessarily involve busing, was far more acceptable than "busing" inner-city children to other Rochester schools and suburbs. For the white parent whose child attends a Rochester school outside the inner-city, the end result will ultimately be the same -- his children will go to school with nonwhites from the inner-city. The difference appears to be one of rhetoric, in which parents interviewed referred to the "voluntary" nature of the transfer. It is not so much the concept of "busing" per se (which has been the target of groups vociferously opposing desegregation efforts) but the fear that the principle of involuntary busing over long distances will be established. Opposition was not so much to "mixing" or "busing" per se, but to how it was to be achieved. Nonwhites responded positively to the idea of having a choice in their child's education through open enrollment.

3. The introduction of open enrollment in two schools did not create widespread antipathy among the white parent population. Parents at both schools were equally favorable to suggestions for open enrollment at all levels. Least supportive of open enrollment at the elementary school level were those parents who were least familiar with its operation.

4. Parents in segregated schools were more receptive to system-wide changes such as coordination between suburb and city, middle schools, and the idea of "upgrading" inner-city schools as solutions to the problems of racial imbalance. Those from desegregated schools were more apt to think in terms of other solutions.

Implications.

1. In general, the attitudes expressed by the parents interviewed indicate the need to present a plan as an educational decision rather than as a plan whose sole purpose is desegregation.

2. Any plan involving desegregation at the elementary school level would have to stress the point of "safety" as one of major consideration in the formulation of the plan. The way busing is defined is important -- "forced busing" must be played down and emphasis must be placed on the fact that the distances involved in any transfers would be kept at a minimum.

CHAPTER VI

PARENTAL REACTIONS TO DESEGREGATION PROPOSALS (Summary)

1. A few weeks after the plans had been made public, the Center research team sent a mail questionnaire to all parents previously interviewed. Of 421 parents, 106 (25%) answered the mail questionnaire. Thirty-eight of these (36%) responded after learning of the school board's decision to reject all four proposals. Those who answered the mail questionnaire included a greater percentage of whites and parents with high school diplomas: of the total of 250 white parents interviewed, almost one-third (79) answered the mail questionnaire; of the 171 nonwhite parents in the original sample, only 16% (27), all Negroes, responded; those without high school diplomas made up almost one-half of the interview sample, but just about one-third (36%) of the follow-up sample.*

In the mail questionnaire, parents were asked about (a) their exposure to the public presentations of the four plans; (b) the degree of their participation in the discussion that followed; (c) how informed they were about the plans; and (d) their attitudes towards school desegregation per se and toward the four plans.

(a) Exposure

Given the fact that most of the respondents were interested and involved enough in the issue to take the time to reply, it can be assumed that their exposure was comparatively higher than that of the rest of the community.

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* A thorough statistical analysis of our data revealed that neither the smallness of the sample nor the fact that some parents responded after the board's decision significantly affected the validity of the responses or the representativeness of the sample. We even have evidence that the board's decision helped to secure responses from a certain type of parent who otherwise might not have answered the mail questionnaire.

Each parent was rated on an Index of Exposure to Information as relatively high, medium, or low; highest exposure indicating that he had heard or watched all of two broadcasts and read all of the summary report carried in the papers; lowest, having neither heard nor watched the broadcasts nor read any of the newspaper reports.

(1) Roughly one-fifth of the respondents were rated "low" on the Index of Exposure, with Negroes somewhat less exposed to needed information than whites.

(2) Two-fifths of the parents fell into the "medium" range, and it can be said that they were insufficiently exposed to information needed to arrive at a decision.

(3) Only two-fifths of the respondents thus appear to have been sufficiently exposed to information they needed for an objective evaluation of the various proposals under discussion.

(b) Participation

Responses to questions on attendance at meetings and discussions served as a partial index of the extent to which individuals deliberately sought out information on the plans.

(1) It appears that Negroes were more likely to have sought information from those they considered "experts," or from professionals in the school system. Whites were more likely to have sought information from friends and organizations that supported and confirmed their predispositions.

(2) It is evident that the degree of participation was higher among white parents than among Negroes.

(c) Level of Information

On every plan, whites were somewhat better informed than Negroes. Both parent populations were best informed on the Rochester plan and least well informed on the Home Base plan of the Center.

(d) Attitudes Toward School Desegregation And The Four Plans

(1) Almost all Negroes favored school desegregation and were in favor of one plan or another. Of the 27 Negroes responding, only one was opposed to school desegregation as a solution to school problems and to any of the plans proposed. Two others, while not in favor of school desegregation, per se, would have gone along with any plan that had been passed by the Board.

(2) Of the 79 white respondents, 19 (24%) were in favor of school desegregation. Twelve of these 19 white parents were satisfied with at least one of the plans presented. The remaining seven recognized the need for school desegregation but for one reason or another were dissatisfied with any of the plans suggested. Sixteen others (20%) though not in favor of efforts towards desegregation and not in favor of any of the plans suggested, would not have resisted any plan once it had been approved by the Board. Forty-four (56%) of the 79 respondents were opposed to school desegregation as a solution to school problems and would have resisted any plans for desegregation proposed by the Board.

(3) To sum, we have the following distribution of responses among the total and white samples:

	Total	White
Unqualified Support	34%	15%
Qualified Support	7%	9%
Qualified Resistance	17%	20%
Resistance	24%	32%
Militant Resistance	18%	24%
	100%	100%

Both quantitative and qualitative analysis (the latter discussed in Chapter VII) sought explanations for the various types of responses -- ranging from Unqualified Support to Militant Resistance.

2. Factors Affecting White Responses

(a) Those white parents whose children were attending desegregated schools were no more likely than those whose children were in segregated white schools to oppose or support school desegregation per se. But the degree of opposition or support for the plans is clearly related to the individual school attended.

(b) The parents most satisfied with their child's school and most favorable to school desegregation were those with the highest socio-economic status; least satisfied and least favorable were those at the middle income levels. Some relationship between satisfaction with the school and attitudes toward desegregation efforts is apparent: only one of the 19 (5%) white parents favoring school desegregation was

dissatisfied with his child's school, whereas 14 (23%) of those opposed to desegregation were very dissatisfied with the school the child is attending.

(c) Those most resistant to any plan shared the following general characteristics: Most had completed high school but few had attended college. They were employed either in low level white collar or high level blue collar positions. On the average they had fewer children than those favoring desegregation efforts but their aspirations for their children were relatively "low." Their children were more likely not to be doing well in school, and the parents were less apt than other parents to be completely content with the child's present school. Such parents, then, are at neither extreme in occupation and education -- they represent those in the middle, not as bad off as they could be, not as well off as they might hope to be.

(d) Parents unqualifiedly opposed to any plan were typically those with the least exposure to the public information programs on the plans. There is an indicated association between low exposure and strong opposition to the desegregation plans. The reverse is true when one looks at the relationship between the degree of participation in the debates over the plans and the position taken. Here, those who were inalterably opposed to desegregation plans played the most active roles in the debates. Those most militantly opposed (24% of the total sample), constituted 45% of the sample with a high degree of participation in the debates. This association between unqualified opposition and relatively high participation in the debate reflects the tendency of some parents to seek out occasions to voice their opposition and reaffirm it.

(e) The general level of information was highest among those willing to go along with any or at least one of the plans. There was little difference among groups with regard to how much they knew about the Educational Park Plan and the Home Base Plan -- all were relatively ill-informed on both.

(f) Those favorable to desegregation appeared to be best informed on the Rochester Plan while those inalterably opposed to any plan were among the least informed on the Rochester plan. Among all parents there was strong potential support for, or at least, least resistance to the Home Base plan. Least attractive, apparently, was the Rochester Plan. Even among those favorable to school desegregation per se less than half were positively disposed toward the Rochester Plan. The level of potential active resistance to both the Home Base and Natural Educational Park plans was genuinely and unexpectedly low: only some 15% of those opposed but willing to go along with a plan, if passed, were opposed to the Home Base Plan and 24% opposed to the Natural Educational Park Plan.

(g) Negro parents favoring some plan were, unlike the white parents, equally well informed on all plans, but, like the whites, were somewhat more apt to be "opposed" (20%) to the Rochester plan than to the Home Base Plan, towards which 88% were positively disposed. A significant point is that the Rochester plan, endorsed by some Negro spokesman, did not receive, as might have been expected, more support than the other plans.

(h) Parents' written comments lead us to believe that the Rochester Plan was the best known mainly because it was the plan around which most of the opposition was mobilized. The controversial publicity focusing attention on the Rochester Plan perhaps explains the failure to give equal attention and publicity to the other plans. The Board, evidently interpreting the opposition in the community to be opposition to any plan, rejected all four of the proposals. We believe that this may have been just the point to have passed one of the other plans, or some combination of them. Turning down the Rochester Plan would have constituted a sufficient face-saving victory for those opposed. This would have allowed at least some of them to drop their active opposition. Moreover, much of the opposition to specific plans involved a failure of parents to understand the educational value of the plans and a fear that they would negatively affect the quality of education for "white pupils" in Rochester.* It would have been advisable, when endorsing some other plan, to have emphasized the educational value and benefits of the plan for the individual child and the individual parent.

We can only regret that the Board precipitously and unexpectedly came to a fast decision before all the pertinent "facts" were in.

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* See Chapter VII for details.

CHAPTER VII

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF TYPICAL RESPONSES TO DESEGREGATION PROPOSALS (Summary)

Just about one-third of those responding to the follow-up questionnaire expressed wholehearted support for efforts towards school desegregation and were favorably disposed toward one or more of the plans suggested.

Unqualified Support: Negroes.

1. Almost all Negroes responding to the mail questionnaire favored school desegregation and were in favor of some one of the plans being passed and implemented. Only one expressed opposition to school desegregation as a solution to school problems and to all plans proposed. Two others, though not enthusiastic about school desegregation, per se, would have gone along with any plan that had been passed by the Board.

2. Why did most Negroes unqualifiedly support the passage of one or another plan? Unsurprisingly, support came both from parents who were very satisfied with the education their children were receiving in desegregated schools and from parents who were very dissatisfied with the education their children were receiving in segregated schools. But unqualified support came also from the substantial percentage of Negro parents who said they were very satisfied with the education their children were receiving in segregated schools.

3. Looked at another way, we can say that support for school desegregation was available from Negro parents of widely disparate backgrounds, ranging from upper-middle-class Negroes with children in desegregated schools to lower-class parents with children in segregated schools in the inner-city.

4. However, none of the parents with children in the segregated schools was upper-middle-class, whereas 18 percent of the parents with children in desegregated schools fell into that category. Thus the Negro parent of children in desegregated schools is better off -- in terms of education and occupation -- than the parent of children in the inner-city schools. The children already in desegregated settings are there because their parents want them there. Thus, their support for one of the plans and for desegregation in general comes out of prior convictions as well as from satisfactory experience with integration. Most of these parents are highly ambitious for their children.

5. The Rochester Plan, supported by certain Negro spokesmen, was the least popular of the plans with the Negroes. The Negroes who favored a specific plan preferred the Home Base Plan. Eighty-seven percent rated it favorably and none negatively; 86 percent rated the Park Plan favorably, but nine percent disapproved of this plan; whereas the Rochester Plan, though rated favorably by 70 percent of the Negroes, was definitely opposed by 20 percent.

6. Responses of Negro parents both to the interview and the mail questionnaire thus lead to the conclusion that the Negroes most immediately involved with the public schools -- those with children in the schools -- believe that their children will get a better education in desegregated situations. Whether satisfied or dissatisfied with their children's segregated schools they favored a plan that would move them into an integrated setting. However, like all parents concerened with their small children's well-being they preferred a plan that would keep them as close to home and supervised at all times of the day as possible.

Unqualified Support: Whites.

1. Of the 79 white respondents, 12 (15%) were unqualifiedly in favor of school desegregation and were satisfied with at least one of the plans presented.

2. Almost all of these had children in elementary school and therefore had a long term interest in the quality of education in the school system and most were satisfied with the present school their child was attending. They were satisfied with the neighborhood in which they were living. Most were relative newcomers to the neighborhood and only three had plans to move away.

3. As a group, these parents were, compared to others interviewed, above average in educational attainment: although four had not finished high school; a relatively high proportion had at least some college education and others had received graduate education. One-third of the fathers were professionals. Of the fathers without college educations, two were skilled workers.

4. All 12 parents had high aspirations for their children, and all had plans to send their children to college.

5. This concern for education -- as reflected in their own attainments and in their goals for their children -- provides the main basis for the support these parents give to school desegregation. They spoke of what they believed to be the poor schools in the inner-city, "poor," that is, in terms of the quality of education the pupils in those schools were receiving. These parents saw desegregation as a way to improve the quality of education for all. The main emphasis in their support for school desegregation was that Negroes should be helped to get out of the inner-city schools.

6. An additional component in the support these parents give to school desegregation could be called ideological. One of the few parents in this group who expressed dissatisfaction with the school her child was attending was dissatisfied because the school and the neighborhood lacked ethnic and racial diversity. Several of these parents emphasized the importance of exposing children to a wide range of social experience with children of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds.

7. Nevertheless, almost all were opposed to the idea of busing their own children out of their neighborhood as a solution to the problem. Four of the parents said they preferred educational parks because they believed parks would eliminate the need for busing. Some parents said they could prefer a combination of two or three of the plans because they hoped it would be possible to improve the educational quality without the need for busing.

8. Two said they would be interested in the Home Base Plan if they had had more information about its operation.

Qualified Support.

Seven white parents supported the idea of and recognized the need for quality school integration, but disapproved of all four plans submitted to the Board.

1. Five of the seven had at least one child in an elementary school in the far Northwest section of Rochester. Consequently, under any of the plans presented, their children would have had a long distance to travel to an integrated school. Unlike other parents in the same school district, however, these parents were not opposed to the idea of Negro children bused into their predominantly white school.

2. Compared to the typical Rochester public school parent, these parents, as a group, were above average in educational attainment.

3. All were long-term residents of their neighborhood, with no plans whatsoever to move. All were born either in Rochester or another Northern city.

4. Six of the parents said they were very satisfied with the education their child was receiving. The seventh had some complaints but was not "very dissatisfied."

5. Although they rejected all four plans, these parents were most ready to go along with the proposal for a Natural Educatioanl Park.

With regard to this group of parents, three questions occur: (a) Surrounded as tney were by neighbors in active opposition to school desegregation per se, why were these parents ready to recognize the legitimacy of school desegregation efforts? (b) Since they supported desegregation in principle, why did these parents reject all four plans? (c) Why was the educational park idea most appealing to them?

First, this group of parents, for reasons mainly rooted in personal and direct contact with Negroes, evidenced a stronger than average recognition of the Negro's plight. All responded to what they had seen with concern rather than with the antipathy expressed by their neighbors.

Second, it was because these parents believed the Negro pupils were receiving an inferior education in the inner-city schools that they did not want their own children bused into those schools. These parents dwelt at length on the educational value of the various desegregation plans. In general, they approved of those elements of the plans which appeared to

them to be of educational value and opposed those elements which appeared to them to have no educational value.

Third, for reasons above, they argued in favor of integration at the middle level rather than in elementary school.

Fourth, among all the plans presented, the educational park plan seemed to this group of parents the plan that most clearly had educational benefits inherent in it.

Qualified Resistance.

Eighteen parents who responded to the mail questionnaire were not in favor of efforts to desegregate the schools, disapproved of all four plans submitted, but nevertheless would not have resisted any plan that would have been adopted by the school board. To understand their position, the 18 must be divided into three sub-types: (1) those white parents whose opposition to desegregation is rooted in prejudice or ignorance and whose lack of resistance has socio-economic roots; (2) those white parents whose opposition stems from a disapproval of or a failure to understand the goals of desegregation but whose lack of resistance is based on a fundamental sense of decency and fair play; and (3) Negro parents whose objections were in some way ideological.

1. Five white parents -- prejudiced but apathetic.

(a) Though these parents expressed bigoted or prejudiced opinions about Negroes, they would not actively resist any desegregation, if adopted, because they are politically passive and "worn down" by the world. They neither like what is happening nor feel they can or should do anything about it. They are not so much alienated as apathetic.

(b) These parents were relatively poor, uneducated, and having a difficult time coping with life in general (two were in despair over the behavior of their white neighbors).

(c) They had the impression that Negroes were getting special treatment and benefits and that Negroes had great political power. These parents thought that school desegregation was simply another special program to benefit the Negroes. They were totally unaware of how school desegregation or any of the plans could possibly be of any benefit to their own children.

(d) All five parents wanted to move in order to solve the problems facing them.

(e) The children of four of these parents were in trouble in school.

2. Eleven white parents -- skeptical but reasonable.

(a) This is a more solidly middle-class group than the five we have just described. Some are professionals.

(b) With one exception, their children attend segregated white schools.

(c) Most have large families; many have children just beginning their formal school training; almost all have children who would have been directly affected had a plan been approved by the school board. In short, they were very much personally involved in the question of school desegregation in Rochester.

(d) Two major themes were expressed by these parents in explaining their opposition. Some equated school desegregation with busing.

Others were either skeptical of the educational values of desegregation or else were afraid that desegregation would mean a lowering of the quality of education. Some wanted to be shown that desegregation would not mean the sacrificing of their children's education.

(e) These people saw the need for upgrading the education Negroes were receiving, but, unlike the whites classified as giving qualified support, these parents only hoped and wished that the plight of the Negro could be improved without their own children having to be involved.

(f) Compared to the five white parents (prejudiced but apathetic) these parents felt in greater control over their destiny. They were in a better position to make a choice as to what to do should a plan be adopted. Though most had no plans to move, they were in a better position to move than the group of five. Compared to the latter, their children were doing better in school and had a better chance to be accepted in a parochial school.

3. Two Negro Parents.

(a) The two are quite different from one another. The main thing they have in common is that their children are being bused to segregated white schools. One parent, however, was very happy with the education and the experience her child was receiving in a suburban school; whereas the other was not satisfied with the reception of her child in a white high school.

(b) The upper-middle-class parent who was happy with her child's experience in the suburban school apparently was able to distinguish between her own satisfactions and the needs of the community. Though

she was pleased, she did not see how "busing black children to where they were not welcome could improve the educational system of Rochester." Her recommendation was that the "black schools be improved to the point where white parents would want to enroll their children in them." Still, we do not know if she would transfer her child from the suburban school to an excellent inner-city school. This parent told us she would move if her neighborhood became completely segregated. Both mother and father are college graduates.

(c) The second parent is less well educated and more politically involved. She was brought up to be "humble," but her son was teaching her to be outspoken. The son was hostile to whites, and, in part because of this, the mother was opposed to desegregation. She believed the school her son was being bused to was not as good as the all-Negro school he had attended in the South. At that earlier school, the mother had been an active member of the PTA -- "happy, needed, and respected." She could hardly imagine herself doing as well at her son's white high school in Rochester. In addition, her son was having trouble at school, and busing had proved to be unpleasant. Her conclusion: an all-Negro school would be better. This family, relative newcomers to the North, were so disappointed they were thinking of going back South.

Resistance and Militant Resistance.

All parents in this group are white; but though only 19 of the 44 had been active in their opposition to desegregation, all were unqualifiedly opposed to the plans submitted by the superintendent to school

desegregation per se, and all would join in efforts to resist any plan once passed.

1. Sixty-eight percent of these parents were from the three northernmost schools in our sample. Most live in a predominantly white section geographically isolated from the rest of the city.

2. The parents are long-time residents of their particular neighborhood; some had attended the school their children now attend; 70% cent of parents interviewed from the two northernmost schools had lived in their neighborhood for seven years or more (among 250 white parents interviewed, 53 percent had lived in their neighborhood seven years or more).

3. While the 44 parents [compared to the other 35 whites in the sample supporting or less resistant to desegregation efforts] are of relatively low socio-economic status, the militants among them were considerably higher in status than the nonmilitants. Again, while these parents as a group had relatively low aspirations for their children, the militants among them generally had higher aspirations for their children than did the nonmilitants.

4. These 44 parents who are so opposed to desegregation have fewer children per family than any of the other groups of parents.

5. What characterizes the group is a kind of insularity, a contentment with a way of life that would be, in some way, altered by desegregation efforts. While only about half are thoroughly satisfied with their present school, most view their neighborhood and school situation as a beneficial environment for their children.

6. Moreover, these resisters and militants expressed a high degree of antipathy to Negroes with militants being more vocal about such feelings than nonmilitants.

7. A close look at ten militants who reveal strong feelings against Negroes indicates they are of two types: half are poorly educated and in blue-collar positions. A small but vocal number, however, have children in a recently desegregated school. The latter are middle-class, have relatively small families, and their children are doing well in school. All of them, in the neighborhood over eight years, indicated, in an interview held before the plans were announced, that they planned to move because of the Negroes who have been bused in to their school. Unlike other parents with children in the same school who had given qualified support to the plans and did not mind having Negroes bused in, these militantly opposed parents were terribly distraught over the bused-in Negroes. They described them as vulgar and combative and, like some lower-class parents less resistant to desegregation [see above], they also saw Negroes as getting special benefits and attention, to the detriment of white children. One-fourth of the total group classified as resisters or militants (44) were planning to move because Negroes were coming into the schools.

8. One concludes that different types of whites have far different reasons for implacably opposing efforts towards desegregation. The middle-class parents whose children are in a desegregated school present quite a different picture from those who live in the geographically and sociologically isolated neighborhood in the North of Rochester and both groups differ from those living in racially mixed neighborhoods.

The first group was disturbed by the roughness and vulgarity -- as they define it -- of the Negro pupils. For the second group, the opposition is to the idea of change and the disruption of their homogeneous community. The fact that the change and the disruption appear hand-in-hand with a feared minority intensifies their feelings but is not the cause. Finally, the lower-class parents feel that Negroes are being given special attention and privileges that limit the chances of their own children. They view desegregation efforts as one more scheme to promote Negroes at the expense of whites.